

# Summer and School Days

by doofusface

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## 1. Unintended Chemistry

**\*\*I have no explanation for this other than yelling "HIGH SCHOOL AUUUUU" and pointing out that there will be references to the movies/shows, but otherwise no dragons, they're HS seniors so 17/18, and... yeah no, that's it, that's all I have.\*\***

**\*\*Disclaimer: Still don't own the HTTYD franchise. Still bummed about it.\*\***

\* \* \*

><p>On a scale from 1 to 10, Astrid Hofferson was an 11... on the Stressed-Out-O-Meter.<p>

Certain things in the wild, wild world that is public school should never happen. A rather large sum of things, really, though for the purposes needed herein there are only three to be remembered:

- That she, Astrid Hofferson, Class President, was never to be on a teacher's bad side. Ever.

- That she, too, would stay captain of the lacrosse team unless outmatched talent-wise. Never because of grades.

- And that, as a Hofferson, she would never, under any circumstances, have to be tutored.

Needless to say, the second she failed to fulfill the first bullet point a heavy panic befell her. We're talking full out "MY FUTURE IS RUINED" freak out. It was so heavy, in fact, that she had even asked

Rachel "Ruffnut" Thorston to cover for her at practice while she was off begging Mr. Herder to not have her kicked out of the school.

Ruffnut. Thorston.

Cover for her.

At lacrosse practice.

They may have been best friends, but this was the same half of a pair who thought it necessary to subject herself and her twin's legs to a dip in the piranha pool on the last school trip. (How those two survived past their childhood eluded her-they'd grown up testing the edibility of most chewable objects in their daycare.)

Astrid sincerely hoped the overripe and destructively moody AP Chemistry teacher had even a speck of goodness in his hopefully-existent soul. Mildew Herder was not a good man to go up against-though he made it quite enjoyable to stay on the other side of the proverbial fence-if "quite" meant "it's-like-heaven-on-earth-here". That still didn't mean the accident was her fault, though.

And it's not like the fire was that bad, honestly, and she conceded to preferring the blaze over his sorry excuse for a lecture on something like bonding molecules, or whatever. (Herder's class was essentially fifteen students staring at a blank board and mastering the art of zoning out without getting caught. It was, as Astrid had once said to Frank-Fishlegs, "The perfect time to learn how to sleep with your eyes open.")

Besides, what kind of well-educated human being who was put in charge of an AP class put dangerously flammable chemicals right next to the room's heater? The thing was known to bust up and leak. It also happened to block the doorway. It's almost like he wanted someone to trip it up.

Astrid sighed. Really, remembering it now, she was mostly just grateful someone had seen the stupid thing start leaking again and shoved her back out the door. She'd looked back right away to thank the stranger, but the hallway was full of students, and the fire had already begun.

Well, whoever you are, Astrid thought to herself. Thanks for saving my life. Too bad I'm gonna go lose it again when my parents find out.

She groaned outwardly, facepalming herself in the almost-empty hallway as she headed to the principal's office. "They're going to kill me. Then they'll bring me back to life for a lecture and kill me again."

"Astrid?"

She turned. The weak, nasally voice had come out from the school's resident "loser-nerd" (Sonny "Snotlout" Jorgenson had dubbed him that-which, Astrid recalled, had been extra cruel at the time, since the lanky little boy had just learned that his nickname had already alluded to the fact that he was inferior in all possible ways).

Hiccup shifted weight from one leg to another, clearly a little uncomfortable.

"Oh," was all Astrid could say. "Hi?"

"I just-" He looked around nervously, as if he could sense the mental judging from the other handful of people mulling around. It was weird to see him like this, considering he was usually light-hearted and sarcastic. He seemed...\_concerned\_, almost. His messy brown hair flopped around and he dug his hands into his pockets, finally looking her in the eye. "I just wanted to ask if you were okay?"

She kept a straight face. As much as she wasn't one to conform to the invisible rules of social classes in her school, it was, well, \_Hiccup\_. "Bad Idea" Hiccup. "Fantasy Nerd" Hiccup. Hiccup the Mess Up.

She'd called him something very different in her own mind, though-he was Henry "Hiccup" H. Haddock III, the best artist in her grade with the brain that stored information the way Fishlegs stored food. Hiccup, the one who made her and the rest of her class laugh in spite of themselves at the school talent show, when he'd impersonated various celebrities and their equally varied accents.

Hiccup, the unlikely friend she'd made at a get-together with the who's-who of the city when they were in middle school. Hiccup, the idiot she kissed on the cheek that same summer at a different outing because he was sweet, he was funny, and he understood the feeling of having to fill in a gigantic pair of boots (literally).

He was the son of the mayor after all.

(They never got to talk about that day; the following school year marked the beginning of high school, and the little interaction they had was all but forgotten for the next four years.

"Besides," Astrid had told Ruffnut when school started, "it's not like he would remember something like that.")

When she didn't answer, Hiccup started rambling, leaning on the lockers for support. "No singses or anything? I wasn't sure if I got to you in ti-"

\_Oh\_. "That was \_you\_?"

She managed to say it in an accusatory tone, as if his actions hadn't save her life. Astrid mentally slapped herself. Learning to watch her tongue was something she was still getting used to-she wasn't voted in as class president because she was \_nice\_, she won because she got the job done, and everyone knew it.

"Sorry," she said, scrunching up her face in self-annoyance. "That came out mean."

"That's one word," Hiccup quipped, slightly returning to his usual self.

She raised an eyebrow at him. He shrugged. "Well it \_is\_."

Any students previously still lurking about the hall had left to go

home, like normal people. The two teens stared at each other in a surprisingly comfortable silence, measuring up the other and, without the other's knowledge, remembering the sunset at a fancy beach party, in a cove Hiccup had found with his dog's help.

A door click reminded Astrid why she was here in the first place. She turned to leave, stopped herself, turned back, said a brief-and slightly awkward-"Thank you", and left

She didn't notice his goofy smile as she walked away, and the door to the principal's office had closed by the time the whistling engulfed the hall.

## 2. The Lunch Episode

**\*\*Ah, nice reviews ;o; thanks guys! \*\***

**\*\*Lots of explaining here? Sort of. AND FRIENDSHIP, YAY!  
\*\***

**\*\*Disclaimer: None of these are mine. Except maybe the story idea.\*\***

**\* \* \***

><p>"Now, Mildew, there must be some way to work this out. Ms. Hofferson here has been an outstanding student in both her academics and extra-curricular activities. The board is increasingly grateful for her; she's put us on the map! Surely there's something we can do that neither threatens her scholastic future nor your, ah, standing with the students and school board, hmm?"<p>

Mr. Herder clicked his tongue, frowning. He knew the board would can him if he showed even the slightest hint of being replaceable-and getting rid of the star of the Berk Academy Dragons over an accident which implicated him as well certainly made him replaceable. "I suppose she could be given a failing grade for today's exercise instead..."

"Good man, Herder, good man!" Principal Sven exclaimed, patting Mildew as he not-so-subtly shoved the (incredibly) old teacher out the door. He turned to Astrid. "Safe to say that man's been having more odd incidents like these since your class advanced a year."

Before the blonde could speak, Sven held up his hand. "Don't worry, we're looking into it. Found a pattern, even, for instance, always happens at the start or end of class, and always by the doo-Oh, what am I saying? You don't need to hear this! Haha!"

The burly man pat Astrid's shoulder, causing her to double over slightly. Dude was strong.

"Er, sir, does that mean I can leave?" she asked weakly, bracing for a second pat.

The principal ceased his laughter, clearing his throat. "Oh, yes, ahem, of course. Go on, now, dear."

Astrid booked it. Politely, if that was even possible. She heard Principal Sven say, "I'm sure you'll make up that grade in no time!"

She wasn't so sure.

A failing grade-even just one-meant her average dropped. A lot. She would need to work up a lot of extra credit alone somehow, between her other AP classes. Plus, it was nearing winter break, and with her extra-curriculars taking up the rest of her otherwise free time-there was a dance to plan, and activities for the next semester to organize, and for heaven's sake, the team was going to kill her if she skipped again.

\* \* \*

><p>"I'm <em>beyond<em> dead."

"That you are."

"Ruff."

"What?" The twin chewed on her burger while simultaneously fending off her brother from reaching it. "You said it. I'm just being supportive."

Astrid buried her head in her hands, sighing.

After practice, the three of them had headed to the school hangout-Gobber's Gronkles and Shakes, the "best grease-filled food this side of the lake" (or so the sign said). Perfect for starving teens with stress issues.

Or, in the twins' case, roughhousing without being reprimanded... as long as they attacked only themselves.

"Could you please stop? About to ruin her family name, here," Astrid begged, refusing to lift her head. It was starting to overheat as she thought of ways to magically fix her grade problem. Senior year, she thought. It had to be in senior year.

Sensing real exhaustion from their friend, the twins paused mid-battle, shared a look, then grinned devilishly.

Tuffnut (his real name was Thor; who names their kid 'Thor Thorston'?! ) started the ball rolling: "Well..."

"You could leave it to us."

"We've got some moves."

Ruffnut nudged her brother. "And keys, don't forget the keys."

Tuffnut nodded. "Indeed. Keys to certain rooms in the school."

"Rooms that have certain files."

"And grades," Tuffnut said. The two leaned in closer to Astrid, who

in turn pulled back, grimacing.

"\_Lots\_ of grades," Ruffnut finished.

They looked deranged, high on the idea of stealing and cheating and sneaking around. Astrid was sure they would start cackling maniacally at one point, leaving her to stare at them with a mix of confusion and fear. And Hofferson were \_famous\_ for being fearless.

(She had proof of standing up to a bear when she was six; normal parents would've asked her why she didn't run instead-hers had asked why she didn't \_chase\_ the beast.)

Before she could muster a retort containing the words "I can't \_cheat\_", the twins abruptly switched off their insanity. They returned to fighting over Ruffnut's sole burger instead, leaving Astrid gaping at their mood swing. She stared in bewilderment, the gears in her mind turning, trying, and failing to come up with a suitable explanation as to why the two blondes in front of her functioned the way they did.

\_At least \_some\_ of us are enjoying ourselves\_, she thought, slurping away on her shake without taking her eyes off the twins. How in the \_world\_ did she meet these people? Their families lived on opposite sides of town, and none of their parents were in the same businesses.

Not that she wasn't thankful for their friendship; they'd definitely formed a strong bond over the years, with Astrid being the default voice of reason, Ruffnut the surprisingly caring one, and Tuffnut coming up with schemes. Constantly. Her parents didn't object to the friendship, which was \_weird\_, but they'd explained it was because the two were challenges-"...and a Hofferson never backs away from a challenge!" (When she told the twins, they had laughed about it because even their \_parents\_ thought that that was true.)

So friends they stayed. One thing irked her now; it might have been the metallic, industrialized diner they were in, or that the twins were now fighting for the last bite and she \_still\_ didn't understand why they didn't just buy \_two\_ burgers, or it might have been her reminiscing (which it probably was). It was a tug at her memories from their kindergarten years: \_who\_ introduced them to each other? \_When\_ did she start hanging out with the town's resident adrenaline junkies with stellar interior design skills?

She knew it wasn't of her own doing. Astrid wasn't the... \_friendliest\_, when she was younger; she distinctly remembered shoving Snotlout into a tree when he'd called her braids "stupid" and "ugly"-it was funny now that she thought about it, considering he spent the last four years doing \_nothing\_ \_but\_ trying to get her to go out with him. \_Pathetic.\_

The twins were annoying to her back then; she remembered that much. They "accidentally"dumped glue and glitter over her clothes. On the first day.

So who thought it was a good idea for them to meet and be civil?

"Oh, hey, Hiccup," Tuffnut said abruptly, knocking Astrid out of her

thoughts.

What timing.

That's right; it was small, frail Hiccup who introduced them. He was always trying to make friends, helping keep the peace on a playground that didn't want him anywhere near it.

(Snotlout agreed to push him on the swing once-and that was the last time Hiccup ever trusted him.)

It wasn't like Hiccup didn't have a good heart or anything. It was more like he was a bit strange, that one, making odd contraptions and shuffling over to whomever was closest to show them. Through the years he'd learned to understand when and where he wasn't wanted, though.

Any "friends" he'd made those formative years became friends with each other and left him to play with blocks of Lego alone.

That pulled at her heart; she was one of those "friends".

Hiccup nodded at Tuffnut. "Hey. Everything good here?"

He was wearing an employee shirt that had one of those 'Hello my name is' badges on it. The establishment's logo was some weirdly shaped dragon thing-or it was supposed to be, but Astrid thought it looked more like a pile of rocks. With teeth.

"Okay as okay can be," Ruffnut replied.

Tuffnut jumped in. "We're better than okay, even. Like... Uh... Better-okay!"

"Ugh," Astrid groaned, annoyed. "That's not even a word, Tuff."

"Is too! I just used it," the blond boy replied with a huff.

Astrid shook her head in an attempt to clear it from the pure stupidity she'd just witnessed.

"How did you even get to senior year?" she hissed at him. Remembering Hiccup was still there, her politeness went on autopilot. "Do you wanna have a seat?"

"D'ah-Can't, uh, working?" he said, half sarcastic and half taken aback by her offer. Her very much not-as-mean-as-three-hours-ago offer. He looked at her suspiciously, as if he was expecting her to trip up and let slip her plan for a prank. Or something to that effect.

When that didn't come-and in an effort to save her from embarrassment-he added, "Thanks, though? I guess? And if you're done with that, I can take it off your hands-I mean, you know, for clean up."

She sheepishly handed him her glass and he left.

It did not save her from embarrassment.

"\_You\_ invited \_him\_ to sit with \_us\_?" Ruffnut whispered not-so-subtly.

"Us, Astrid! The finest specimens in Berk Academy!" Tuffnut added.

Astrid raised a brow at him. "I didn't know you were a 'fine specimen', Tuff."

"That is \_hurtful\_."

"You \_like\_ hurtful," Astrid countered.

Tuffnut rubbed his chin, dreamily staring at the wall. "That I do, that I do."

She sighed heavily, grabbing her bags and getting up from the table. "I'm outta here. Call me when you have any \_legal\_ ideas."

The twins motioned to speak as she walked out the door and she called back, "I said \_legal\_!"

It was like she could read their minds.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Hahahahahahaaaa<strong>

\*\*Astrid's \_doomed.\_\*\*

\*\*Want more? R&R! (and something even a tiny bit substantial, please)\*\*

### 3. Plan A

\*\*I love the twins to bits, you don't even \_know\_.\*\*

\*\*Anyway, reviews help me with ideas (or changing ideas), esp since this AU will probably only touch on a few points in the canon universe themselves.\*\*

\*\*For future reference: somewhere in the next couple chaps is a tiny HTTYD2 spoiler (but it'S NOT WHAT YOU THINKKKK), the dragons are p much various animals, the characters are, again, somewhere around 17-18, so imagine a less "I-need-to-prove-myself!" Hiccup and a (slightly) less aggressive Astrid, among other things.\*\*

\*\*Disclaimer's the same as last time, sadly.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Four things Astrid was grateful for:<p>

- That it was Saturday.

- That her parents weren't called about the... \_incident.\_



- That she was friends with the Thorston twins.

- And, most importantly, that the aforementioned twins had a very legal and sensible plan for her academic survival.

Oh man was she grateful for the last one. Except, of course, it hinged on the availability and generosity of another person. And she wasn't even sure if her parents would ask why in the world she needed extra credit.

"If you wanna fail, go ahead, don't listen to us," Ruffnut said over the phone. "But I know you don't."

Astrid fell on her bed-a mess of blue and white and yellow, mimicking her pet blue parakeet, Stormfly. The bird in question was flying around her room, landing on the multiple perches Astrid had attached to the walls. It was an intelligent animal, learning what things to avoid and what things were free to eat. Astrid loved her to bits.

"What'cha think, girl?" Astrid asked the parakeet, covering the lower part of her phone. "Should I go with it?"

The bird answered by flying down to her side, whistling a happy tune. Astrid smiled, uncovering the phone.

"Okay, guys. I'm in."

"Did you ask the bird again?"

"Shut up, Tuff, like you don't talk to your snakes."

Monday rolled around, and so did the execution of Plan A.

It was a fairly simple plan: get to Fishlegs, explain to him her situation, and hopefully get him to agree to add her name to his science fair project-which, if they placed, guaranteed an A to any and all science classes.

And Fishlegs always placed.

"Are you sure this is going to work?" Astrid asked Tuffnut, who was scouting out the lunch hall for their target. "Because you two do not have the best track record."

"Have some faith in our mega-scheming brains," he replied, motioning to his twin who was on the other side of the room. They sent vague signals to each other, back and forth, leaving Astrid to seriously consider having them both checked out.

"Aw, nards," Tuffnut huffed.

Astrid raised a brow. "What is it?"

"Ruff just heard from Svenson, who heard from Heather, who heard from her aunt, who's best friends with the Larsons-"

Astrid caught Tuffnut by his collar, forcibly pulling him down. "There better be a point to this, Tuff."

"-Fishlegs is out with the flu." Tuffnut squeaked. Astrid dropped him.

She forged through the room, stopping to sit on the table Ruffnut had reserved. "\_Now\_ what."

The other girl ate messily, not bothering to pause mid-bite to reply. "Now we do Plan B."

"Ruff, I am not agreeing to you changing my-"

Ruffnut raised a hand. "Chill, sister, it's not that."

Astrid tilted her head in confusion, prompting Ruffnut to continue.

"There's still another nerd," she started, looking around for her twin. "And I believe you already have \_history\_."

Astrid nearly yelled. "\_Hiccup\_?" She grabbed her friend's shoulders, shaking her. "Are you \_insane\_?"

"...Is that a trick ques-"

"Yes."

"Then yes, yes, I \_am\_ insane," Ruffnut replied proudly. Astrid frowned at her disapprovingly. "Oh, wrong answer?"

"Do you even know what a trick question is?"

"Yes? No. Oh! That was one, wasn't it?" the double-braided girl said in rapid succession.

Before Astrid could work out a retort, before Ruffnut could block the hand already aimed at her arm, before Tuffnut could tackle \_both\_ of them for no real reason, the aforementioned Hiccup managed to pass by. He gave the three of them "and-you-say-\_I'm\_-weird" looks, adjusting his knapsack carefully.

"What are \_you\_ looking at?" Astrid snapped.

"A bunch of wild animals, apparently," Hiccup replied, not missing a beat. "Tuff's about to grab you guys, by the way."

The girls ducked; Tuffnut jumped forward, hitting nothing and colliding loudly with the floor. He got up dizzily, holding his head. "Ngg... Awe... some..."

Hiccup and Astrid shook their heads; Ruffnut asked if she could go next.

"\_Please\_ just go back to eating," Astrid said. The twins complied, resigning to hitting each other on the head in the comfort of their seats instead. Astrid heard something fall behind her, and turned to find a leather-bound sketchbook face up on the floor, and Hiccup nowhere in sight.

She picked it up, flipping through it's pages: heavily rendered drawings of building and people and-wait.

"What the-" She kept looking through the faintly yellow pages, recognizing vaguely familiar surroundings and definitely familiar faces of people.

This is the school, she thought. He's been redesigning the school.

-

"Yo, Astrid, what is that?" She recognized the voice.  
Unfortunately.

"None of your business, Snotlout," she replied curtly.

The burly quarterback ignored her, making a move to grab the sketchbook. She retaliated with a strong kick to his shin. "I said it was none of your business."

Snotlout raised an outstretched hand. "Just let m-"

(There exist things in this world which one must learn to never cross. At the top of the list is 'A Hofferson'.)

Astrid grabbed his hand, pulling his fingers backwards with the strength of a viking. Snotlout yelped, deciding against making another pass at her as he got up.

The twins snickered behind them, enjoying the free show-especially since it included Snotlout getting hurt. The latter excused himself in a weak attempt at keeping whatever dignity he had left.

(Which, from the twins' perspective, was in the far negative.)

"What was that about?" Tuffnut laughed.

Ruffnut leaned forward. "Yeah, not that we didn't like the violence or anything, but-"

She was cut off by Astrid, who had (carefully) tossed them the sketchbook. "That. It's Hiccup's."

"Whoa," they said in unison. "He's good."

"Ooh, Tuff, you know what this means?"

"Uh, yeah! ...No, not really, what's it mean?"

Ruffnut turned to Astrid, smirking. "This is your in."

"What? That I know he draws? Big whoop, Ruff," Astrid said haughtily.

"I... still don't get it," the blond boy frowned. "Can someone explain? Thinking is hard."

Astrid sighed. "She wants me to use it as some sort of blackmail."

"Doesn't have to be blackmail!" Ruffnut said. "Just use it as an excuse to talk to him. Look, you need a good grade, and he can get you one. 'Sides..."

Ruffnut skimmed through the pages, seemingly connecting dots Astrid didn't.

Astrid raised a brow. "What?"

"Nothing," Ruffnut finished, turning to her brother and giving a \_look\_. A "don't-mess-this-up-Tuff" look.

Maybe she it was the stress and exhaustion taking over, because instead of forcing it out of the two, Astrid merely slumped back into her chair, determined to get \_some\_ nutrients into her body. Not once did she look up until the lunch bell rang, at which point Ruffnut pulled her away and Tuffnut slipped the sketchbook into her bag, under a pile of important documents.

She wouldn't notice the black and yellow package fall out of her bag as she throws it across her room, not even when Stormfly lands on it with a song. She wouldn't see it moves to her work table, thanks to her mother (she's exhausted; it's Wednesday and there's a paper due tomorrow, so she prints it out with her other assignments, dumping them on top of the book).

Astrid forgets about the plan altogether until lunch on Friday, when Ruffnut asks to see the drawings again, and they point fingers at each other because, well, Astrid certainly didn't know the twins had dumped it in her knapsack that day. And when she gets home that night and looks through it-this time really\_ looking \_this time, scrutinizing every detail, every stroke of the pen and pencils, every blob of paint.

She doesn't realize it, but she'd counted-subconsciously, duh-the times when her frame, her face, her \_features\_ were included in a page or spread. Consciously, she just thought the drawings were cool.

(She'd been in most every page; sometimes her back, or her distinctly braided hair. Her bright blue-custom-knapsack at the corner of a drawing. Her face in a crowd, or, as in at least one case, just her blue eyes staring at something off the page.

The only pages she wasn't part of were of his home drawings; a black labrador with a prosthetic and a tongue hanging out mid-pant.)

#### 4. Plan B

**\*\*ROFL THIS IS SHORT I'M SORRY (not really, I had to cut it where I did otherwise it would get weird)\*\***

**\*\*Hospitaller1080 - whassat even meaaaaannnn\*\***

**\*\*To everyone else sending such nice reviews: 3333333333 MY LIFE BLOOD.\*\***

**\*\*same disclaimer blah blah blah\*\***

**\* \* \***

><p>Astrid found Hiccup's address through her parents; they'd agreed

that winning the science fair was a "worthy goal", and consented to her need of help, seeing as she "would've died under the pressure" otherwise. (They'd been supportive and caring, which, Astrid realized, was either due to them noticing her work ethic, or-and most likely-because they noticed her work ethic but still didn't know about the fire incident.)<p>

It was a wintry Saturday morning, cold and foggy and her absolute \_favorite\_ weather-it would be a white Christmas, she knew. Intuition and all that; she'd been born in these cold, frozen months-it was like being tied to the elements.

She'd walked over to his place, finding it not far from her own, down a clean street with large yards and lined with all kinds of trees. His was of wood and brick, a noticeably homey sort of house that commanded respect while still promising comfort.

So like her parents. Kind of.

When she rang the bell, she almost ran away.

Almost.

But she was here on a mission, and she had his sketchbook to return, and \_dangit\_, she was \_desperate\_ for some help.

\_Oh, me\_, she thought to herself. \_Remember when you swore you'd never ask for help? Wuss.\_

Sometime during little self pep talk a muffled voice had made itself heard through the door, yelling to someone in the other direction. They exchanged a quick conversation that Astrid couldn't understand even if she tried. All she heard was the last line: "I got it, Dad!"

The door swung open to reveal Hiccup in an old, worn, green sweatshirt and rolled up pajamas. His hair was messier than usual; it was maybe 9 am, so she figured he'd just woken up, evidenced by his yawn and eye-rubbing. "Look, Gustav, I told you already, Too-uhhh... You're not Gustav."

Astrid looked down, stretching out her coat. "Nope, guess not."

Hiccup did a double take, checked the inside of his house, and turned back to her. "D'ah, sorry-Ah-That's-I-Wh-Why are \_you\_, y'know, \_here\_, exactly?"

She didn't know why \_she\_ was nervous, or if what she \_was\_ could be equated to being nervous, but she was \_something\_, alright. It wasn't an in-school interaction; they weren't the Popular and the Loser here, not under prying and judging eyes from fellow classmates and-in some cases-friends.

It was a friendly neighbor-to-neighbor visit, and Astrid found herself relaxed yet jittery, smiling in spite of herself and, what the \_heck\_ \_was\_ happening, \_get it together, Hofferson\_.

"I, er, here," she stammered out-seriously? \_Stammered?\_ Weak-handing him the neat leather book in her hands. He almost cried.

"I thought I lost it forever, thank you! Aw, man, if Snotlou-" Hiccup caught himself mid-sentence, turning to her suddenly, with something resembling fear in his eyes. "Did you, ah, did you look-?"

"Uhm. Yeah," she replied somewhat ashamedly. "Nice redesigns."

"That's al-Of course that's all," he muttered to himself, flipping through the pages. When he got to a spread which contained nothing but sets of identical eyes, he glanced at her again questioningly. She just looked confused.

(Hiccup figured he was safe.

Astrid didn't know what the big deal was.)

"Uh, yeah," Hiccup said, breaking the increasingly awkward silence, "well, thanks for-you know, this." He tapped the sketchbook on his free hand, with a forced laugh. "\_So\_."

Astrid swayed back and forth on her heels, uncharacteristically running out of words. "\_So\_."

A sound from the house caused Hiccup to duck his head inside quickly. Astrid saw him mouth something to someone. There was a roar of laughter in response.

"Uh," he said, rubbing the back of his neck. "Do you... wanna... come in? I mean, it's freezing, kind of, and yeah, warm? Heater? Haha..."

She almost said no. She almost forgot why she was there in the first place-\_who\_ she was talking to. Mostly, really, what she \_did\_ forget was to be mean to the guy; he hadn't sassed her \_once\_ for the duration of their talk, not even when she was clearly not acting like herself.

(Which wasn't so bad; last time they'd talked like this, things ended \_very\_ positively for the both of them... Until school started.)

"Sure."

"I mean, it's fine if not, obviously, cause \_me\_ in \_close\_ proximity-"

"Sure, Hiccup."

He heard that one. "D'ah-What?"

Astrid put her hands on her hips threateningly. "Do I have to repeat myself or do you need a knock on the head to understand?"

"No! No need for either," the boy said, waving his hands. "Ha... Yeah, just come in." He moved to the side, keeping his head low.

She didn't see the smile that formed on his lips when she'd past him.

He didn't see her blush.

## 5. Impromptu

**\*\*Uhhhh this got long. (for me, at least)\*\***

**\*\*My brain is all over the place, sorry ;o;\*\***

**\*\*IMPORTANT: Minor MINOR minor \_minor\_ HTTYD 2 spoiler in this chapter. Which you would know about if you saw the full trailer? So... yeah.\_><em>\*\***

**\*\*SAME DISCLAIMER BECAUSE I'M NOT DREAMWORKS\*\***

**\* \* \***

><p>The first family member to greet her wasn't human; it was a bounding black lab, hell-bent on licking her face. She'd never forgotten that dog.<p>

"TOOTHLESS! You're \_gigantic\_," Astrid exclaimed, kneeling down to cuddle with the beast. The dog stopped abruptly titling it's head with a confused, "Aroo?"

She laughed, scratching his neck. "But you're still adorable, don't worry."

"He likes you," Hiccup blurted out.

"I can see that," Astrid said with a laugh. Toothless hadn't ceased attacking her with licks to the face, his tail wagging incessantly for every scratch she gave.

Hiccup decided he liked her laugh.

Like, a \_lot\_.

Heavy footsteps boomed as a large man entered the room. He had a thick beard, and if it were white and he wasn't the mayor, he would've heard a \_lot\_ more Santa Claus jokes this time of year. The man had a thick accent-Celtic, almost. "Son, did you ask if your guest would like some warm m-Oh. Hello, lass," Stoick said, surprised to see the famed Hofferson girl standing in his living room.

Moreso that she was talking to his son.

Willingly.

Astrid got up quickly. "Mayor Haddock!" She hurriedly straightened out her coat, offering the man a hand to shake. "Uh, sorry for coming unannounced."

Behind her, Hiccup whistled Toothless to him, keeping the lovable dog from playing with her for the time being.

Stoick roared with laughter. "None of that 'Mayor' rubbish here, Astrid. Just 'sir' will do, if you must continue with using a formality. You're here as a friend," he answered, taking her hand and

shaking it firmly. "...A friend with a strong grip! Well, well. Val will enjoy your company."

And that was how the proverbial ball began rolling down the proverbial hill: Valka, Hiccup's mother, shared his medium build-she was graceful, and her long brown hair was split into multiple braids, falling down the span of her back. And she was nice, to boot.

A few words exchanged with her led to Astrid calling her parents to tell them that no, she wouldn't be home until after dinner, no, it wasn't Hiccup's idea, yes, the mayor said hello, and yes, they could come over for dinner if they wanted. She'd also been given free reign over the flat screen in the guest room, unlimited playtime with Toothless, and, as a bonus, mega-awkward alone time with the boy she'd decided wasn't so bad after all.

(He'd warned her to not eat the fish that night if his mother was cooking. No self-respecting terrible person warns others about potentially catastrophic dishes.)

"Er."

The sound came from the brunet; while Astrid was being given the house tour (they had a freaking gym in their attic), Hiccup was instructed by his mother to "get dressed"-which he must've translated into "wear something that shouldn't look attractive but is" because she swore she'd never seen anyone look so good in plaid.

(Except herself, of course.)

Hiccup was in the doorway to the guest room, his hands stuck firmly in his pockets. His sleeves were loosely rolled up to his elbows; his hair was still a mess, but a mess with purpose.

And he stood as awkwardly as she felt.

"Hey," Astrid said, shifting from the middle of the 3-seater couch to the right side. Hiccup took it as a sign that it was safe to take a seat... on the other edge of the couch.

They flipped through channels in silence, neither with any vague idea of how to kill the next couple hours til lunch. Or the hours after before dinner. At some point, Toothless had jumped onto the couch, curling up beside the blonde before, then his owner, then back to their guest.

In the middle of a spy film, Astrid finally snapped out of it. "Oh! Right, I never told you why I came."

Hiccup furrowed his brows. The lighting in the room allowed her to see a faint scar on his chin-something she hadn't noticed in all the years she'd known him. (Read: A lot.)

"I thought you came over to give me my sketchbook?"

"Well, yeah," she said slowly, "and to ask if you wanted to work on the science fair project together."

The boy looked confused. "Me? Wh-"



Astrid held up a hand. "Look, let me finish, okay? The thing with Mildew last week? He's dropping my grade for that exercise to an F."

"But that was--"

"40% of our grade, I know," she confirmed. "And you know my parents; I was going to ask Fishlegs, but he's out with the flu, and the valedictorian position--"

"Okay."

Astrid gaped at him. "What?"

"I'll help you out, sure," Hiccup replied, reclining on the couch. "No strings attached."

"Why? After everything I've done to you--"

He shrugged. "I'm a gracious loser. I need the grade anyway-and beating Fishlegs at a science fair would be a pretty cool story to tell."

Astrid didn't know if she wanted to kiss him or put him in a straitjacket. He was so nonchalant about her request-her request, the girl who, granted, didn't treat him as badly as Snotlout on a daily basis, but still ignored him unless absolutely necessary. The girl who stood by as her friends laughed at him behind his back that one day when Snotlout had dumped paint on him before the football game. The girl who yelled at him freshman year because he had the reflexes of a newborn sloth during a dodgeball game, was on her team, and almost ruined her win streak. Almost.

The girl who went home that day ranting to Ruffnut about how much of an idiot she was, swearing to at least try to be nice to him for the rest of high school. The girl who scolded herself every day she'd broken that promise to herself for the last three and a half years because she was Astrid Hofferson she could do anything-except apologize, apparently.

The girl who turned down dates to every dance and event because she didn't quite feel alright spending time with any of them, not when she could still remember a golden sunset by clear, blue waters and the distant, joyful barking of a puppy who'd seen a butterfly. The girl who'd leaned on a brown-haired boy's shoulders, and, before falling asleep to the sound of the waves, nudged him slightly, "For kidnapping me," and gingerly kissed his cheek-"For everything else."

"Uh, Astrid? You're... worrying me," Hiccup said, waving a hand in front of her (though not too close-he wasn't sure how much of a friend she was at this point, and he really needed his fingers because art.)

Toothless shared his sentiments; the dog raised his head from Astrid's lap, tilting it and letting his tongue hang out. He barked in her face, jolting her back into reality.

What is that? The nth time this week? she thought to herself, rubbing her head. I really need to fix my sleeping

schedule.\_

"Sorry."

Astrid was two things at the moment: pretty (at the very least, if you asked Hiccup), and tired.

(AKA, just tired; let's be real, Hiccup wasn't being the most \_objective\_ at the moment, given their history.)

"You can take a nap in my room," he blurted out-and immediately regretted it. The blonde's head shot up, giving him a cross between a glare and a grimace, confused on all levels. Even Toothless looked at him quizzically.

Hiccup gestured wildly, swinging around his arms and rolling his shoulders as if he didn't know what to do with them. "I mean! Not-I-I'm going to go, uh, bury my head in the ground, or something-I don't know, yet, actually, what do you think?"

She continued with the look.

"Yeah, burying-burying sounds good, I-\_ahem\_-I'll be in the backyard."

"Is he... For \_real\_?" Astrid asked Toothless after her host had left.

The dog replied with a mildly disappointed face, as if to say, \_Yes. Unfortunately.\_

"Poor boy," she said, petting the dog.

The TV hummed softly; they'd settled on of of the \_many\_ movie channels, catching the credit sequence of one animated film. It showed concept art on coffee-stained paper, and names she didn't recognize.

"Huh. Weird-looking dragons, right boy?"

The dog barked enthusiastically in response. Toothless jumped off the couch, circling the room; his red prosthetic shone with reflected light. Judging by how he was acting, Astrid figured it was his favorite film.

She got up to stretch; her watch read 10:30. "An hour and a half to kill..."

She spent some time exploring the room with Toothless, finding an astounding number of architecture books in one cabinet, and art awards with Valka's name on them in another. In minutes, a yawn had escaped her; a stark reminder of her \_ridiculous\_ lack of sleep, and physical and mental exhaustion. She felt the exact opposite of invincible.

"Ugh... Maybe I'll take up that nerd on his offer. Hey, Toothless."

He turned his head. "Roo?"

"Which way?" (The rooms weren't a part of the tour, for obvious reasons.)

It was like she'd promised him a bucket of meat and bones-Toothless' eyes widened, and he jumped around the middle of the room, almost knocking down a lamp from a side table. His tail was wagging furiously, and Astrid swore if it was humanly-animal-y?-possible to go any faster, it would.

"Dang. Does he hide your treats in there or something?"

She regretted saying 'treats'. Toothless only got more excited, barking up a storm. Astrid tried to hold the dog down, staring him down. "Okay, okay! Look, you bring me to Hiccup's room and if I find any treats, I'll throw you one. Deal?"

"WOOF! AROOF!"

"Good boy."

(They got lost twice because of miscellaneous bird noises coming from the windows distracting Toothless. Astrid sincerely hoped she could find at least three treats in Hiccup's room, because the dog was honestly too helpful not to reward.)

The stairs ran through one side of the house, turning a corner before reaching the second floor. The left side of the hall had two rooms, a separate bathroom at the end, and an open area connected to a terrace on the right. The place was big.

Hiccup's room was by the bathroom. The door was ajar, decked out in movie posters and-uh. A Berk Academy Dragons Women's Lacrosse Team photo.

To his credit, it wasn't of the current team (which would've been awkward and creepy); it was old, and she vaguely recognized Valka in the Captain's seat. Under it, a B.A. Football Team photo-again, old-capturing the mayor in his glory days (though, to be honest, he didn't look all that different to Astrid).

"That's right. He said something about them being varsity royalty..." she said in awe, opening the door slowly.

The room itself was a surprise.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Haha remember when you thought this was going to mostly be about the project itself HAHAAH fooled ya<strong>

\*\*Friendly reminder to review! Because it helps me! And thus makes the story better!\*\*

\*\*\*++ Valka never left here because nO HUSH I NEED A HAPPY STORY\*\*

## 6. The OTHER Lunch Episode

\*\*THIS GOT.. UNINTENTIONALLY LONG..\*\*

**\*\*Ah, yes, hello dear readers IT IS I. This would've been up yesterday, but I was out watching HTTYD 2. Again. With friends. Because we like pain, apparently.\*\***

**\*\*HAVE FUN KIDDIES\*\***

**\*\*\*disclaimer disclaimer disclaimer\* \*don't own don't own don't own\*  
\*etc etc etc\*\*\***

**\* \* \***

><p>When someone mentioned Astrid Hofferson, they closely followed it with 'student government', 'lacrosse', or 'pretty'. If they were being completely honest, they'd throw in 'selectively mean'.<p>

When someone mentioned Hiccup H. Haddock III, they closely followed it with 'smart mouth', 'artist', or 'mildly attractive'. If they were being completely honest, they'd throw in 'genius'.

Astrid was beyond completely honest.

The guy was amazing-he'd hung layered architectural drawings from the ceiling which would only take shape if seen from specific positions (which he'd marked with messy 'STAND HERE -' signs all over the room). One was of a familiar red prosthetic; Toothless' prosthetic, she realized with awe.

He had books on all sorts of animals and plants strewn across the room in various open states, and drawings of said animals and plants pinned up on a wall designed as a world map. Strings connected them to each other, like in detective shows.

("I don't know, yet. Maybe like, environmentalist or something. Something with animals-but not a vet, I can't take all that medical stuff, y'know? I'm not built for medical stuff.")

She'd forgotten that memory existed, or that they'd talked about such things. She did remember saying she wanted to take be in the air force, though, much like her parents-something she very much didn't want to do now.)

By his bed was a pile of clean clothes (discarded unceremoniously; she realized they were from earlier, when he had gone to change, and blushed) and beside-and under-those were miscellaneous news articles on wildlife preservation and innovative architecture. She spotted notes from bird migrations to coral reef protection, many in the same hand as the 'STAND HERE' signs.

Toothless jumped onto the bed, and immediately switched to pointer position, his body directed at a tall, thin cabinet. Astrid carefully walked through the mess that was paper on the room's floor; she didn't want to damage anything, and she, as a teenager, didn't want to "help" by "cleaning"-there was always a method to their madness, no matter how messy their rooms got.

She reached the cabinet no sweat, mentally thanking her coach for all the footwork exercises she'd endured over the years. Toothless kept his position, his nose pointing to the top drawer. She reached up to open it and-

"I would not do that, if I were you," a voice said behind her.

Astrid froze; that was Hiccup's voice. She turned and opened her mouth to apologize for snooping, but he already had the "Shh" sign up.

"I'll get it. If you open it without keeping eye contact he'll jump you and drop the whole cabinet- trust me, I know," Hiccup said, rolling his shoulders. "Switch?"

Astrid looked at Toothless, frowning. "I feel betrayed."

The lab hid his head under his paws in shame-he was found out.

Astrid shuffled back to the doorway, trading places with Hiccup. The latter opened the drawer while initiating a staring contest with his dog, successfully keeping the animal from pouncing. He tossed a treat in Toothless' direction before walking back to Astrid, handing her three more.

"Only give him one at a time-he's a treat glutton," he told her half-jokingly. "You know, if you wanted to take a nap, you should've told me so I could've cleaned up all... this." He gestured to the mess that was his room, looking increasingly embarrassed that she'd seen it in that state... and one spot in particular-where his clothes were.

"Nah," Astrid replied nonchalantly. "My room's a mess too."

(She was lying.)

"You're lying."

Astrid shrugged. "Okay, but I appreciated the, uh-" she said coyly, nodding at the pile of clothes, "-you know."

Hiccup coughed, pretending to not know what she was talking about. Astrid didn't force it out of him, suddenly very awake and very aware of the distance between them. She turned, patting his arm, and hurrying out the door, fighting back a growing smile.

Today was gonna suck for her image.

But who cares, right?\_

\* \* \*

><p>"So, what did you two decide to work on?" Valka asked when lunch <em>finally</em> rolled around. Her accent wasn't as rough as her husband's, but it was certainly still there, and still thick.

(After the room... er, thing, the teens had settled into a much more comfortable state in the backyard, tossing around a ball for Toothless to follow while sharing some in-school gossip; being from two VERY different ends of the social hierarchy, they each provided vastly different sets of news.

Somehow, they'd gone from sitting across each other on the grass to being right next to the other. Toothless would periodically nestle himself by their crossed feet, resting his head on his owner's lap.)

Hiccup's head jolted up, food mid-way to his mouth.  
"\_Uh\_."

"Filtration system," Astrid said without thinking. "For plastic and oil."

She'd seen the plans in his room on one of the hanging documents by his bed. It looked plausible, and really, at their school 'plausible' was all they needed.

(Besides that, engineering was something she'd found herself liking more and more, and winning the science fair with this project would've been the perfect excuse to let her parents know she wasn't planning on becoming an air force pilot.)

Hiccup gaped-he didn't quite know how long she'd been in his room-but recovered quickly enough to say, "Yeah, what she said."

Valka squeezed her husband's hand, and they shared a small smile.  
"That's quite a challenge for a high school project, don't you think?"

"She likes challenges," Hiccup said offhandedly, getting ready for another bite.

Stoick roared with laughter. "\_I\_ could've told you that, son!  
Haha!"

Valka fought back the laugh caught in her throat for the sake of the children, deciding to just swallow water until the man had calmed down. Meanwhile, the two teens had turned to each other looking as confused as ever. They shrugged when neither could give a viable explanation and continued their meal.

Lunch was littered with questions few and far between, given that there would be more talking later that night, and that the mayor was receiving calls left and right about infrastructure problems which he would then ask his wife about-she was an architect after all. (And all throughout, the two never separated their hands.)

Hiccup watched his parents with such adoration that Astrid couldn't help but smile-he'd come a long way from that scrawny boy who didn't know what he wanted, trying to fight his status as the "family failure". He was still alone at school, sure, but she did notice a new air about him the last couple of years-like it didn't bother him anymore, or that he'd accepted it. He seemed to know what it was he was looking for now-he seemed to be comfortable and happy, which was more than she could honestly say for herself.

"That was fantastic, thank you," Astrid said at the end of the meal. It really was, though; assorted meats and sauces akin to a Nordic feast were now settled in her-extremely happy-stomach.

"Oh, you're too kid, Astrid," Valka replied with a laugh. "You live close by, correct?"

"Yes, ma'am. Just around the block."

"You come by anytime, dear. There's always a place here for a friend of Hiccup's," Valka said with a smile.

Stoick hung up his phone one more time, returning his attention to the table. "Do you drive, lass?"

Neither teen knew where this was heading, but Astrid answered anyway. "Yes, sir."

"To school and back?"

"Yes, sir."

"Son," he said, and Hiccup knew. "Why don't you two carpool instead?"

Possible answers:

A) Because we only really talked today.

B) Because she's Astrid and I'm Hiccup.

C) Because my car looks terrible.

D) BECAUSE NO, DAD, NO. THAT IS A BAD IDEA. PLEASE.

So, obviously, Hiccup went with C.

"Dad, my car's pretty crummy-"

"Nonsense! One less car on the road means less pollution, correct?"

Hiccup sighed. His father knew about his environmentalist plans, and-gosh darn-he wished he never got the courage from a girl-the same one who was seated beside him at this very moment-that he, Hiccup, was not going to take law all those years ago. He begrudgingly replied, "Yes, Dad."

Stoick had left his seat by now, already starting to gather the plates. "Then, as a future caretaker of this earth, you should be jumping at the idea!"

"...I am, on the inside." Far inside.

Throughout the whole exchange, Astrid had gotten progressively redder; luckily, she had started to help pack up the table (much to the approval of Valka), and thus could hide the fact under the guise of huffing about while transporting plates.

It's not like she would've minded, really-it was just carpooling. With only two people. Which could very well be misconstrued in the turbulent world that is high school.

(But really, really, if she was being perfectly honest, she didn't care. She might have even admitted-under severe punishment-that she that it was a good thing.

That \_he\_ was a good thing.)

"Dad, don't you think Astrid might, y'know, \_not\_ want to carpool?" Hiccup said pointedly as the blonde made her way back into the room.

His father facepalmed. "Oh, of course, where are my manners? My apologies, my dear."

"Oh, uh, it's not a problem, sir," Astrid said, deliberately not looking at Hiccup. "I could-yeah, I could carpool."

Her heart thundered as she said the words.

His almost stopped.

"Fantastic!" Stoick said. Before he could add anything else, his phone started ringing again-much to the teens' joy. "Ah, I'll have to take this. You can work out the details yourselves, I trust?"

"\_Uh\_, yeah, sure, Dad," Hiccup replied, still dumbfounded by Astrid's response.

With the table cleared, Valka excused herself to her study-"Much to plan for the new museum wing," she'd said before disappearing into a room filled with rolled paper and plastic tubes.

That left the two high school seniors sitting beside each other in an... \_interesting\_ predicament.

One was staring at the wall, deciding it was a \_fluke\_-what she said was a fluke, and they'd forget about it soon, and she'd be out of his hair \_again\_, and he's regret not chasing her \_again\_.

The other was leaning her head on her hands, blowing her bangs out of her face every few minutes, deciding maybe he \_wasn't\_ into her-he was just being \_courteous\_, because that's what \_hosts\_ are supposed to be like, \_courteous\_ and \_awkward\_, and she'd regret making a move \_again\_, and he'd forget about it \_again\_.

They both ended up sputtering out the same words in the same tone: "Do \_you\_ \_wanna\_ carpool? Because \_I'm\_ cool with it if \_you're\_ cool with it."

"I mean, only if you want," Hiccup said.

"I want to," Astrid replied. "Uh, if \_you\_ want to."

"I do," he answered immediately.

"So we're doing this?"

"I guess so."

"Good."

"Cool."

Astrid got up, putting her hands on her hips. "\_Perfect\_."



Hiccup followed suit. "\_Beyond\_."

They stood like that for a while, unsure if they were being civil or hostile with each other, exchanging looks of confusion and aggression one after the other.

Astrid broke the silence when she relaxed her arms and slowly trudged backwards into the hallway. "...I, uh, I'll go use the, uh, bathroom."

"Oh. Yeah, uh, sure," Hiccup said, rubbing the back of his neck. "You know how to-"

"Yeah, it's up-"

"Yeah, upstairs, yeah."

That was how the day went, mostly: serious conversation, awkward conversation, serious conversation, homework conversation. They did fix a schedule for the project, though-which was due in a month, S.O.S.-sometime after practices, and on Fridays when she didn't have any, the weekends (obviously), and during lunch and free period at school.

She was surprised that he knew when she did and didn't have lacrosse practice-he said he knew because she and the twins always stopped by Gobber's after training, and they never went on Fridays. He was surprised she had the same free period as him-she said she knew because he was always too busy drawing to notice anyone within a 10-foot radius; that, and they got to and left the library at the same time.

When dinner had come and gone, he figured it wasn't a fluke and she figured he liked her back.

And that was that.

(The carpool issue was brought up again at dinner, and the Hoffersons were understandably glad about the lessened gas expenses and gave their consent. Mostly, the teens were just surprised at how well their parents got along, now that they were paying attention.)

\* \* \*

><p><strong>IDK.<strong>

\*\*R&R as usual becauseeee I like to read your thoughts on this 3 (also there's a good chance I'm gonna board part of the end bit because WHY NOT AMIRITE)\*\*

## 7. Schedule: Hectic

\*\*So much better for my hands if I just stay under 2k.\*\*

\*\*Friendly reminder that these guys are, again, high school seniors, so 18ish. Think somewhere in the middle of the movies, and after Defenders.\*\*

**\*\*UHHH what else, what else... nothing else.\*\***

**\*\*ENJOY BUDDIES\*\***

**\* \* \***

><p>"Is that-"<p>

"-With \_him\_"

"Ugh, what \_is \_that? Is that even a car?"

"She's too good for him."

"Dude, ten bucks says she lost a bet."

"What a fake."

"I think it's \_cute\_."

Whispering students on Monday morning made the school barely survivable-especially when the two started sitting together for lunch (plus the twins, of course), and come free period, had been seen together and ACTUALLY. STUDYING. It was a crime in and of itself.

The twins' reactions were much more veiled; neither really knew what was happening between the blonde and the brunet, but they did know why the two had started working so closely together, so they-the twins, that is-mostly wrote it up as 'overly friendly interaction' (not that they were blind) and defended the two when they were being talked about in the halls.

(One thing was for sure though; neither Ruff nor Tuff had seen their friend genuinely smile so much in such a short amount of time. Astrid was much more relaxed around the Haddock boy than she ever was with them.)

Hiccup, being fairly friendless, had a surprising effect on the community-for once in his life, he was mentioned in the gossip underground of the school, with some dubbing him "Soon-to-be-Berk-Royalty" and others insisting that that would never happen.

(To be fair, both teens were incredibly focused on the task at hand; if either was thinking about the big winter formal coming in three weeks, and well, going "together" together, neither left any substantial hints for the other to find.)

(...Then again, they were working in suspiciously close proximity, which was in itself a clue. "Research" could only be used as an excuse for so long.)

They'd gotten accustomed to hearsay about themselves as separate people due to their... S\_tatuses, so handling it together was new. They had to figure out a system of some sort; neither was sure if the other could take the silent backstabbing, and both just wanted the other to be comfortable as they worked.

Happy, even.

Come Wednesday, they started getting a feel for who really cared if they hung out or not, and who was just shocked they did. They'd avoid the first group at all costs.

(Astrid found some from her inner circle, and had curtly told them to "Jump off Raven's Point."; the twins had echoed the sentiment, threatened to throw them off themselves, then walked her to her class. They were like personal bodyguards for the two 'budding lovebirds'-title c/o Tuffnut-alternating between the Queen Bee and the Outcast King and repelling hostile classmates.)

Snotlout had been the biggest annoyance, considering his unrelenting contempt for Hiccup and his... er, Hiccup-ness. The quarterback took it upon himself to be the best bully he could possibly be in an effort to scare off the oddball. Suffice to say, it didn't work, and only caused him to have more enemies than friends.

When Friday came, Hiccup said, "Did we actually care what they thought?" and Astrid smiled, replying, "No; at least, I didn't."

Then she punched him after he walked her to her door, explaining that it was a term of endearment-she was best buds with the Thorston twins after all. He'd look at her, annoyed, and called her as unpredictable as they were-or he tried to at least, before she proved him right by grabbing his shirt and pulling him in for a quick kiss. He'd made such a lovesick face afterward that she had to literally turn him around so he could start walking to his car.

(He'd thought it was worse than wine, what she did-intoxicating and ridiculous, just ridiculous, that one.)

Saturday was half spent building a miniature of their joint project, and half dedicated to other assignments, with Hiccup clacking away on his laptop and Astrid stapling and gluing together props for the winter formal. She'd ask him for art help (for class and for the dance) and he'd ask her to help him practice his speeches (which she learned he was actually really good at); he'd talk passionately about animals-birds in particular; how they flew and where and why-and she'd tell him about the air force and her favorite jets-fighters and all.

She'd confessed that she didn't want to see combat; she just wanted to build the darn things and go home to a family in the afternoon-still, she would learn how to fly and would probably do it for fun; it was one of those things she couldn't drop. He'd looked at her in awe; she wasn't quite as hostile as he'd thought, and the thought of flying with her was something of a dream-or a new goal, if he was being realistic.

Their second week was a lot smoother-not quite perfect, but cozier. Astrid's ex-friends (and Snotlout) leered at the two whenever they'd chance upon each other in the halls. Astrid held her head high in defiance; Hiccup shrugged-he was used to it.

He was still his lanky self, with his trusty knapsack slung over one shoulder and an awkward smile perpetually on his lips. He had started wearing more green as of late, following a compliment Astrid had made offhandedly over lunch one afternoon about it suiting him. The boy

had become more confident in stance and stature, thanks to his dear "friend".

Astrid was warmer, nicer; she didn't attack the twins quite as much, and was much easier to work with on the dance committee and student government. She'd opted for peaceable solutions on the field as well, much to the relief of her teammates, who had to pull her out of a fight one too many times. The twins almost didn't recognize her when she said "thank you" sincerely and completely without sarcasm. It was weird, but they liked it.

They were on schedule to a T-the miniature worked for the most part, and with a few tweaks to the design, the final version should end up working. They worked through the week the same way as last: he'd leave for work while she was at practice, she would ride with the twins to Gobber's and they would eat while Hiccup finished his shift, then, depending on how exhausted the two were, he would either drop her off at her house or they would work at one or the other's homes, constructing and deconstructing the model, running tests, doing research.

(They worked so well in tandem that they could have had given the twins a run for their money. Or spare change, technically.)

The second weekend was lax and strained at the same time-Astrid was hurriedly fixing some last-minute props and making calls left and right because apparently "the band's singer needs to have surgery and I'm dead if I don't find another one" and she swore that she was "going to die and be raised and be killed again, I'm so dead, Hiccup" to which he'd replied something like "Heather's got a band and they're pretty good".

And she slung her arms around his neck and kissed him again ("You are my hero."), apologized ("Oh. Sorry."), retracted her apology ("Wait, no I'm not."), and laughed ("I'm a mess, but thank you."). He had sat there confused and happy and so confused with Toothless by his feet, somehow asleep and snoring.

Sunday was so stressful (for her) and such a gigantic hassle (for her) that Astrid almost canceled their plans for the day to sleep because she very well needed it. Her body was so far gone in the health department that she could've sworn her annoyed groan after waking up that morning could be heard through and through to the next continent (her body clock was stuck at 7 a.m. which was terrible on days when all she wanted to do was sleep in).

...So it was nothing short of a miracle that Hiccup had managed to coax her to the cove under the guise of a test run for the science fair project ("Don't wuss out on me now."), surprised her with a picnic ("I'm not evil."), and a forest walk ("Need some fresh air?"), and, with some help from the twins, a fantastically romantic invitation to the winter formal ("I mean, I'm me, and you're you, but so far that's worked out, right?").

The three of them had marked the invitation on the trees with the same shifted-perspective Hiccup used in his architectural drawings; it spelled out a wonky "Would you dance with a dreamer?" if Astrid stood in the exact middle of a clearing.

(She'd freaked out and hugged him and her friends before landing a

firm punch on Hiccup's side, because she'd "been waiting for ages" and he was "cutting it way too close". He shrugged awkwardly, explaining that it was "hard to plan" because she was beside him "every day, the whole day".)

(...Not that he was complaining.)

\* \* \*

><p><strong>R&amp;R if you love me and care ;o;<strong>

## 8. Week Three

\*\*I said to myself I'd upload it when the fic hit 5K views because, y'know, it was at like.. 4K the other night..\*\*

\*\*And then YOU ALL SHOCKED ME YOU BEAUTIFUL HUMANS.\*\*

\*\*RedTed - dude, you're awesome, THANK YOU; frosty - IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BUT NAHHH\*\*

\*\*disclaimer disclaimer don't own don't own yada yada yada\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>The third week was hilarious and a challenge for a multitude of reasons.<p>

For one, the 'budding lovebirds' weren't so much on the budding side any longer, and Tuffnut had progressively gotten more and more emotional at letting his "baby girl" go. Astrid had to explain to Hiccup that the skater had once posed as her father over the phone to get her out of class so the three could watch a movie. (Ruffnut was just happy Astrid hadn't killed the brown-haired genius-her last few suitors had received some... harsh rejections.)

Then there was Snotlout's face when the two had held hands for the first time during Wednesday's lunch hour-it wasn't like, a planned or intentional action or anything, but one second their hands were very much apart and the next they were very, very much locked tightly together.

He'd left the cafeteria with a sneer, and the twins bet that he was about to go mourn his loss-Astrid didn't care as long as she wouldn't have to see his face anytime soon. Hiccup just laughed.

As for the rest of the student body... Well.

Everyone who hadn't seen the handholding was still on the fence (and a slim fence it was) about their relationship, and that was a treat: wagers on their current status floated around the school (secretly coordinated by the twins), with groups of people sending one brave soul to ask the almost-couple if they were, in fact, together.

(Astrid often said, "That's a good question," turned to Hiccup questioningly, and waited. Usually, he would just let it pass, but by the end of the day and countless instances of the same question-asking, he had replied with a lax, "Well, what do you

think?", asked for the official title of "boyfriend", and she'd said sure just as laxly, and thus it happened.)

Fishlegs was back, still large and not at all in charge. He hadn't taken kindly to the idea that he was about to lose his last science fair after a 6-year streak. He had less than a week to scrounge up the remains of his project-which he had started before he had fallen ill-and he was hating himself for getting sick so late in the year.

(On the topic of the two getting together, he simply said, "Duh. I coulda told you that.")

Thursday was Telling Their Parents day-so, uneventful and much like any other. What were they supposed to do? Feign shock? The four of them has seen it coming from the moment Astrid had walked up to Hiccup for a chat some years ago, and had voluntarily shared her ice cream with him-it was a well-known fact that prying such frozen goods from her hands was impossible. They'd seen reflections of themselves then, and they saw reflections of themselves now.

Friday was the dance-Friday was finding out Mildew was a chaperone, that Heather did have a good band, and that Hiccup was not, under any circumstances, to be allowed to "let loose" on the dance floor.

(His girlfriend hardly minded-it was as endearing as it was embarrassing, and she'd come to learn that that was his trademark.)

Friday was slow-dancing to a cheesy song and stuffing their faces with good food-it was the twins stealing Astrid away for two minutes to dance before realizing that, oh, right, yes, Hiccup was their friend now, too, and going back to drag him onto the dance floor fray as well.

It was Hiccup telling Astrid not to worry when they were taking a breather, because Mildew wasn't glaring at her, he was glaring at him.

(There was a time when Toothless the puppy had made it his mission to dig up all known cabbage gardens in a five-block radius, and the only one with said cabbage garden was Mildew's. The grumpy old man had sworn revenge on the boy and dog-suspiciously, not a week had gone by before the accident that took Toothless' left back leg occurred.)

Friday was Astrid worrying.

Friday was the end of the dance and pure exhaustion-from good things this time, like the dance going right, and tired feet-and a good night kiss not initiated by her. It was a warm hug in the middle of winter by the gym doors (where the dance was held) and by her home's door, after he'd dropped her off.

It was a tux and the boy wearing it; it was his laugh and his gaze and his mind, his boisterous nature, and the small scar on his face amid a sea of freckles. It was a stunning red dress that she'd kept tucked away for special occasions, enchantingly braided hair and a circlet; her smile and her stride and her eyes, her mind and her

\_laugh, and the blotches on her skin.

It was them together as a song played and a crowd stopping to watch because, well, it was \_them\_; and by all means, who would've known?

Friday was the night they both went home to their pets and beds and parents, and dreamed the same vision of dancing in and on and around the clouds-\_somehow\_-and it would feel right and real and \_plausible\_-because, really, in \_their\_ lives, that was all they really needed.

Friday was peace and it was hope, but mostly it was love-unfettered and all-consuming and \_shucks\_, Astrid was turning into a sap and Hiccup was becoming \_more\_ of one, and they were falling into a rabbit hole the size of a football field, with neither having any sense of urgency to even \_try\_ to escape, because for the first time in a long time...

They were \_happy\_.

Saturday was "Watch your step, babe," and "Careful, milady," as the two tried to hail their not-so-little filtration setup to the cove for a full-sized test, and then:

"Holy-"

"Heck-"

"It \_worked\_?"

"Of course it worked, \_I\_ made the plans," Hiccup said, frowning. "Was there ever any doubt?"

"Eh," Astrid replied. "Doubt's a strong word. More like 'slight fear'."

"'Fear' \_isn't\_ a strong word?"

"Not for a Hofferson."

"You're \_spectacular\_," he said, and neither really knew if it was sarcasm or not, so they laughed at the fact that he'd said it.

Then he said it again while he hugged her close, and it was a whisper and it was true, and she said, "You're amazing."

The next day meant resting and chilling and all-around celebrating because they were DONE (and with a few days to spare, mind)-until they realized it was finals week, and no, they weren't \_actually\_ \_done\_.

They quizzed each other over group video calls with the twins, determined to take the two Thorston's with them to high-grade heaven. The latter two had a surprising knack for retaining large amounts of information-without cheat sheets!

"Must be from all the gossiping," Astrid said, never as proud of her friends as she was at that moment.

Monday through Wednesday were the test days; the couple was separated for the most part, except for the usual lunch and study time and, well, chemistry class. The exams were relatively easy thanks to their studying, and the twins decided the whole "no cheat sheet thing" wasn't "that bad" after all.

They'd celebrated as a group on Wednesday afternoon at \_Gobber's\_, with Hiccup convincing his boss to make a few special burgers ("I know about the kobe beef, Gobber.") to commemorate their second-to-the-last set of finals in high school. The man had obliged, sticking toothpicks with flame-shaped bacon bits onto their burgers in the place of candles.

(It was \_delicious\_ and it was \_free\_, and the twins could \_not\_ stop thanking the brunet.)

The science fair was Thursday; Astrid had the twins help her lug the filter to school in the wee hours of the morning so she could have enough time to set it up-Hiccup had had a family gathering to attend after their burger party the day before, and was going to be a little late, seeing as he had to drive in from the neighboring state.

(His parents would stay behind since they had a meeting to attend in the vicinity later that day.)

He had called her before he left-sometime around 6 a.m.-and she'd promptly told him to "hang up and watch the road". He said he'll see her soon, and she said goodbye and "drive safe", and hung up before he could add a few more words.

And that is when things went very, \_very\_ wrong.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AND I'M OFF TO SEE IT A THIRD TIME, HAVE FUN WITH THAT  
ENDING 3<strong>

\*\*(also R&R if you care)\*\*

## 9. Chaos

\*\*Time to ruin your hearts. (with typos. probably.\*\*\*\*)\*\*

\*\*DON'T OWN, but idea, yes, def own.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>She started to worry when two hours had passed and he still hadn't arrived at the school-he did have a knack for disappearing, but never for something as important as this, and <em>never<em> if it involved \_her\_ (which, by extension, meant his parents had taken to inviting the fiery blonde to any upcoming important social gatherings to dissuade the brunet from coming up with excuses to not go).

She wanted to run and find him-punch him, mostly, for freaking her out-but as the sole representative for their joint project, there was no possible way she could bolt out the exhibition hall.

The twins started worrying when it was noon and the winners were



being announced, and he still wasn't there, and he still hadn't answered their voicemails. Tuffnut scrounged up his information trolls and ordered a town-wide search, alleyways and deserted streets and all. Ruffnut sent out mass texts to all known Berkians with any possible connection to the boy (excluding her twin and Astrid, because, let's face it, her friend did not need any more reasons to freak out).

They found no trace of Hiccup in the school or town, even conducting their own search by driving around his residence and all roadways entering the school. They were left crouching by the Academy's gate, praying and hoping and praying that the guy would show his stupid face already.

(They cared almost as much as Astrid did, and since she cared a heckuvalot, they were dying inside.)

Astrid smiled uncomfortably as the judges pinned the red and gold ribbon to their project and took a picture of her with it. They'd asked her where her partner was, and she'd replied that she honestly didn't know, and they said to "congratulate him" when she got the chance.

(She hoped there was still a chance of a chance, before proceeding to mentally slap herself for being such a pessimist. He'd taught her better.)

She'd checked her phone a billion times within the hour, and still nothing; none of her calls or texts were returned or answered (not even from his parents), and by the time the school let out she and the twins had made a mad dash to their car-Ruffnut didn't trust Astrid to be behind a wheel in her current state-driving straight to Hiccup's house with every intention of bashing him up if he turned out to be alright.

He did not turn out to be alright.

\* \* \*

><p>It was explained like this:<p>

He was driving at a fair speed, not quite under and not quite over, and he was in the right-that is, correct-lane, and witnesses reported that the truck came out of nowhere and the driver was probably asleep, seeing as that's always how it was with those beasts of the road, and it was fast and it swerved.

Someone said the old, black Corolla had jumped up a few feet.

Another said it turned turtle, but only halfway.

The people in charge of the case said it might've skidded, but no, it hadn't rolled, and yes the boy was in intensive care, and yes, the driver was reprimanded.

Stoick and Valka were unavailable until the evening, caught up in more meetings than one could count, and stuck in areas with no cellular service. They'd taken the news as terribly as one might've thought, with both sobbing all through the first had made it a habit

to encouragingly talk to his son through the glass every morn and eve, and Valka worried and Stoick encouraged and both were strong and broken at the same time.

The twins reacted as violently as ever, yelling at doctors and policemen with tear-stained faces, asking, "What are you doing here, then?! HELP HIM! Help him, or so help me-"

They screamed at the sky after being kicked out of the hospital time and time again. They screamed at the trees and the ground and the empty cars parked outside because all they saw was the crushed black four-door the photos had portrayed, and the rage, the pure \_rage\_ in their souls.

Then there was the blonde.

The fire and life she had ten minutes before she'd learned what happened-when she was ready to knock her \_boyfriend\_ senseless for worrying them-was, simply put, extinguished.

She did not eat. She did not sleep.

She'd stared blankly at the news that night as the reporter delivered the same notes she'd heard from the cops just hours before. When her parents came to console her and offer support, they found the shell of their daughter. They found shock at its finest, and love at its worst.

After three days she'd finally snapped out of it-with help from the twins-and gotten around to the next stage of her grieving process: anger.

She joined the twins in their rowdy tantrums, throwing rocks at the sea and running their bodies to the ground under the guise of "training" and "staying in shape over winter". They raced each other on the indoor field at the village center, running small marathons and yelling and \_running\_; running from everything clouding their minds and running from the inevitable and \_oh\_, did they wish it \_wasn't\_ the inevitable, because they wouldn't and they \_couldn't\_ be able to handle \_that\_ quite as well as they were handling \_this\_.

And it wasn't that he was "her everything", that she'd designed her life around him in that short almost-month (though, arguably, she'd liked and admired him for \_years\_). No, she wasn't \_that\_ cross-eyed-that dependent on another human being.

But it was the \_shock\_-it was the shock that killed her inside. That he was \_just there\_-she'd heard his voice and it was okay and they would see each other soon. He was \_just\_ there, and at any moment she could get The Call, and he wouldn't be-he wouldn't be \_back\_, and she...

She said she would "be fine". She said, she \_swore\_, that "\_if\_ it happened", she would mourn, but she "\_would be fine".

She would \_live\_ and be herself again and there wouldn't be an empty hole in her chest because she was \_Astrid Hofferson\_, and Hoffersons rose above, and she had \_lied\_.

Because she knew the past few weeks were a culmination of everything they'd fought against for four years, and she knew it was supposed to last much longer than three. measly. weeks.\_

Astrid Hofferson was a smart, smart girl, and she knew what she was feeling was something permanent and immortal and bigger than what her heart could handle at 18 years of age, and she hated herself for hanging up so early.

She hated herself for not saying it.

Day eight was his parents looking through prosthetics. It was Toothless confused when they'd made the trip home for supplies and once again were without their son and his partner, and he was confused.

Day eight was her crying uncontrollably as she threw more rocks and ran more laps and tried to breathe. Day eight was Tuffnut driving and Ruffnut hugging and her parents finally getting her to sleep.

Day twelve was her being calm enough to do more than stare through the glass. She'd whispered the words and hoped he could somehow hear her. Day twelve was the twins behaving because their classmates were visiting; it was Snotlout realizing it was real and very bad, and visiting, genuinely concerned and plenty ashamed.

Day twelve was his parents being exhausted and falling asleep on the plastic seats for the twelfth night in a row.

Day fifteen was losing him for a couple of minutes.

It was her nightmare and theirs, and her pain and theirs. It was the Thorstons bashing the hospital walls and Astrid unsure if she wanted to join them or stop them.

Day fifteen was the day she hated the most, because it was an ultimatum and an inconceivable truth-that if he was gone, she was, too.

(She'd started whispering a lot louder that night, because if he was going to leave her she wanted him to at least know.)

The nineteenth night was like a revival in tandem; he had moved, and she had breathed.

Ruffnut had ordered pizza and Tuffnut had bought ice cream and the three of them decided that at this point they might as well eat away their feelings, because forget it, they weren't doctors. Astrid had ranted about Hiccup's stupid arm movements and his hair and his all-around sappiness, and she ranted about how she was ranting, and she bawled. And the twins were amazed at how hard she had fallen and how fast and how it was actually perfect, and, "You know what? He'll be fine. Because if he isn't, you'll kill him."

And somehow it was three weeks, and the doctors moved him out of the ICU, and he was "going to be okay" and "he's a fighter".

(The kids had celebrated by sleeping a full eight hours, waking up in a hospital room-a real one that was just for him, where they could

stay 24/7 and talk to him, and where Astrid could whisper in his ear about how much she cared, and where the twins could talk to him for hours about absolutely \_nothing\_.)

Then it was four days to Christmas, and emerald green met pristine blue.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>What? I'm not like, <em>pure evil<em>.\*\*

\*\*r&r&r&r eY\*\*

## 10. Day's End

\*\*MWAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA\*\*

\*\*still don't own the franchise\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>It was a <em>spark<em>.

The first thing he said when he woke up was, "Did ya miss me?" and she had to restrain herself from punching him too hard, else his stitches would give.

\_Smart-mouthed, miserable little...\_

Astrid stayed by his bed until he fell asleep, and came back in the morning before he woke up. It was her being caring and patient and everything \_he\_ was for \_her\_, and it was a metamorphosis on the most astounding level.

(Except half the time she was still considering giving him an \_excruciating\_ piece of her mind, which the twins were very much in favor of.)

He wanted out on Christmas Eve, and he was stable, so the doctors agreed that joining the land of the living was for the best-even if it \_was\_ the dead of winter.

Toothless had jumped him, and, feeling only one leg under his paws, looked at his owner expectantly. He "Aroo?"d and "Rarf!"d and he was \_so confused\_, the poor thing. Hiccup had pet the dog, saying, "Guess we're twins now, huh, bud?"-to which the dog had replied with a barrage of face licks.

(His parents had shown him choices for prosthetics that night, and he'd replied that "if it was all the same", he'd like to build his own. Valka had beamed with pride and Stoick had said something about their bloodline and "the strength of their ancestors" being with him.)

Christmas Day was Gobber surprising the boy with a special meal and a gift-his work check, and a rather large sum on it. "Like you never left," the man said, "and then some."

It was the twins inviting themselves over and looking at Hiccup's

designs for a prosthetic, saying, "Yeah, but think of how cool it would be with-" repeatedly (then the mayor invited their parents over for dinner instead of reprimanding them, and it was the weirdest Christmas miracle ever).

It was Toothless stealing a steak off the grill, and Stoick considering making the lab sit outside in the freezing cold for a couple of hours. (He didn't.)

It was the Hoffersons arriving with wrapped presents and ugly sweaters-they owned up to their ugly sweaters, okay?-and the family parakeet chirping away on the daughter's shoulder.

Christmas was mistletoe and Astrid with red cheeks from the cold. It was Hiccup in a wheelchair, but alive and awake and as snarky as ever. Christmas was falling asleep on the couch with his arm around her shoulders and hers wrapped around his waist.

It was the twins spraying whipped cream on their hands while they slept, and the prank working perfectly-though they hadn't accounted for Astrid's fire being back, and her legs being intact, and that was how Tuffnut and Ruffnut ended up running a mile in cumulative laps around the house.

Christmas Day was long and thankful and homey, surrounded by family and friends and stupid things-and gifts, of course.

Ruffnut gave her brother a bandage, and when he looked at her confused, she jabbed her elbow at his ribs. His eyes lit up with adrenaline and the most ridiculous kind of joy, thanked her, and proceeded to wrap himself up.

(Tuffnut nudged his gift to her with his foot-a new arnis stick, perfect for whacking anyone who happened to be close by... Which in effect, was him.)

They'd given Hiccup a helmet ("Now you officially roll with us!"), and Astrid a new set of arm bands ("'Cause you like, totally tore up your old pair."). Astrid handed them one ticket to the new-and expensive as heck-amusement park ("It's got that stupid-fast rollercoaster you've always wanted to try.")-they almost killed each other until Hiccup tossed the second one in the air; Tuffnut almost cried.

Hiccup had asked his father to bring a wooden box down from his room; it was a small thing with golden clamps and Nordic etchings all around, beautiful and historical and old. Astrid always thought it was some decorative sort of piece since she'd never seen him open it-'til now.

It had a leather band with studs and hand sewn designs, carefully constructed and well-thought out. And it was hers and she loved it and she loved him, and yes, that's right, she was a sap now, and she couldn't care less.

She'd given him the letter she started after day nineteen, when she didn't know what was up and what was down-she didn't know anything other than he wasn't talking to her yet, and she missed his voice and his shrugging, and the twins and Toothless and Stormfly were the only things keeping her sane.

It was written in her hand on a notebook she'd found in her room, under a pile of broken things.

(Newly broken; she'd thrown what she could afford to break, and she'd slammed her fists at the wall afterwards. The craters were still there, hidden behind their first place ribbon-she'd thought it appropriate, given that everything spiraled that day and all.)

He'd read it in the guest room where it all started, with the light catching on his scar. She'd leaned on him, absentmindedly braiding his-now longer-hair.

She'd kissed his cheek when he stopped at the last line, and he'd kissed her nose with a smile, and they sat there, with their foreheads touching and their eyes closed and someone started crying and laughing at the same time and it was a thing called closure.

(Later that night, when dinner had rolled around and the twins almost set the tree on fire, it was joyous and unbridled; there was weird music and weird\_er\_ dancing, and it was fun and it was Christmas, for Pete's sake-and it was a mighty good one.)

\* \* \*

><p>It was a <em>boom<em>.

It was one day after he put on his new leg-an alloy he'd crafted all on his own, and bound by leather-and Toothless had helped him up from his wheelchair, and by heaven, Stoick was crying and Valka was beyond excited and proud (but was also crying). The day was December the 31st, and Hiccup was standing.

There was a party at the twins' house-which was HUGE, by the way-and all the Berk Academy Dragons who hadn't left town for the holidays were in attendance.

Astrid had entered arm in arm with "Mr. Peg Leg" (as she called him) and there was clapping and Hiccup hiccuped, because "I was invisible" and "this is so weird".

Snotlout had (gently) pat him on the back and said the he wouldn't beat him up the next semester, on account of Hiccup deserving a "good end to high school". Astrid didn't threaten to break his nose this time, and Hiccup shrugged, and all was well.

The day was January the 1st, and it was a new year.

Astrid didn't even wait for midnight; the crowd-chanting was a buzz she neither minded nor noticed as she kissed Hiccup before, during, and after the mass of students had yelled, "HAPPY NEW YEAR!"

It was the four of them together again, cleaning up after the party-they tried to keep Hiccup sitting, but he'd insisted-and the four of them staying up later than planned, watching an animated film about a boy and a dragon.

It was Storymfly's whistling in the morning as Astrid brushed her teeth and realized it was over and the inevitable wasn't always

inevitable. It was her humming as she braided her hair and put on The Headband, walking downstairs and greeting her parents with a smile they'd sorely missed.

\* \* \*

><p>It was <em>snow<em>.

The day was January the 17th, and there was another blizzard. The teens were stuck at school with the rest of the student body, white snow falling from grey clouds, and it was \_fun\_.

It was sneaking outside via the windows of the gym when the snow had settled and the storm was over. They'd ran around the lawn and what they were \_guessing\_ was the parking lot, throwing things at each other and yelling at the top of their lungs because they were \_young\_, and because they \_could\_.

Hiccup was doing well in every sense, and the metal and plastic and leather stuck on him wasn't a bother in the cold. Astrid was competitive and dusted with snow, the leather band he'd given her etching a permanent mark on her hair. Ruffnut was butting heads with Tuffnut, screaming and growling about nothing at all, and it was okay, because that's always how they operated, and that's how they would operate for the years to come.

It was sneaking back inside because technically, they \_weren't\_ supposed to leave, \_whoops\_. Tuffnut said something about wild adventures when "nature didn't want you to have any" and the other three agreed.

They'd made snow angels when they were finally released from the "prison"-Ruffnut's favorite noun \_and\_ adjective for the school-deciding that acting like children when they were legal adults was \_fun\_ and should be done more often.

"Maybe they should make it a law," Ruffnut said. "Like, one day to be a kid. Just \_one\_-that's all you really need."

\* \* \*

><p>It was <em>them<em>.

It was the air and the cold and \_Berk\_ around them, under them, above them.

It was the season where change had arrived and they \_welcomed\_ it with a challenge and ferocity and \_courage\_, because they knew they could get through it.

It was the end of the day, every day, when Astrid's Mustang cruised through the quiet streets of the subdivision, and the atmosphere dared them to be comfortable.

Daring them to be grounded and \_there\_, breathing it all in and accepting life as it was and as it is and as it was about to be:

Them.

Together.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>hi so that's the end andddd yeah<strong>

\*\*Writing a humor one next, in-universe, and chock-full of spoilers  
whoops\*\*

\*\*(so watch the films and shows)\*\*

\*\*(like)\*\*

\*\*(maybe ten times)\*\*

\*\*HAVE A GREAT WEEKEND YA NERDS \*\*

\*\*R&R? if you liked it?\*\*

End  
file.